



Icebreaker

Do you think you would have liked the apostle Paul in real life?

Understanding Paul's Authority

Read **1 Corinthians 2:1-5**. What does Paul say about his message and his methods among the people of Corinth?

Read **1 Corinthians 2:12-14**. From where does Paul's authority come?

What is Paul saying about the people who reject his message?

What is Paul saying about his message and his methods in **1 Corinthians 3:1-4**?

Read **1 Corinthians 3:5-7**. What is that saying to you and how does that apply to Christian evangelism and discipleship?

The rest of chapter 3 is difficult because Paul switches to using a building metaphor and then he mixes two building metaphors together to make three points, so let me summarize his points: (1) Paul is the expert who laid the original foundation for their faith. That foundation is Jesus, and since there is no other foundation, there is no other person who can lay a foundation. Thus, the primacy of Jesus and the authority of Paul feed into each other. (2) People can try to build whatever they want on the original foundation, but God's judgment will eventually show it for what it is. Thus, people might want to pay attention to Paul as the expert builder to figure out what they should be building. (3) The only building that really matters is the people themselves. They are collectively God's earthly temple and already have everything they need in Christ. Therefore, they need not pay attention to any teaching that goes beyond or contradicts Paul's teaching about Jesus.

Would those three points adequately establish Paul's authority for you? What other lessons do you learn from chapter 3?

Read **1 Corinthians 4:1-5**. Knowing that Paul is being confronted by people in Corinth who reject his authority, what do you think of Paul's attitude?

Most of the rest of chapter 4 is Paul flipping the tables on the Corinthians. Many there have been making fun of Paul, claiming that if his message were so good, he wouldn't have such hardships, but Paul takes that same position to make a different point...

Why do you think Paul says what he says in **1 Corinthians 4:11-13**?

In **4:14-21**, Paul concludes this section with one more claim to authority, a clear command, and a bit of a threat of what's to come. What do you think of that?

Do you think this section would have worked on the people in Corinth? Would it work on people today? Does it work on you?

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